

## The Jurisdiction and Its Residents

Maine is the largest and least densely populated state in New England, with most of its population concentrated in southern and coastal portions of the state, and in a broad band along Interstate 95. The area under LURC jurisdiction generally encompasses the least populous, least developed portions of Maine, most of which lie in western, eastern and northern parts of the state. This 10.4-million acre area encompasses the largest block of undeveloped forestland in the Northeast – larger than Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island combined – and it is largely free of the state routes and populous communities that intersperse the only comparable area, New York State's six-million acre Adirondack Park.

The LURC jurisdiction is a unique natural area with a distinct character. Links to the past remain strong, and the area's natural resources continue to shape its use and value in the future, with forestry and recreation remaining dominant uses. While much of the land is actively managed for timber, many areas are left undisturbed for 10 to 80 years at a time. While clearly not a virgin forest, the region is largely undeveloped and parts of it remain relatively inaccessible due to distance and poor travel conditions. Its clean air and water, diverse natural communities, and abundant wildlife draw thousands of seasonal residents and outdoor enthusiasts each year.

## Description of the Jurisdiction

### Civil Divisions

Three different types of minor civil divisions exist within the jurisdiction: townships, plantations, and towns. The majority (410) are "unorganized" townships which comprise almost 90% of the area of the jurisdiction. While some townships are situated in fringe areas, most are located in the vast interior areas of the jurisdiction. Townships have no form of local government. Property taxation is administered by the state, and services normally provided by local government are funded by the state and contracted for by the state and county government.

There are currently thirty-two plantations and eight organized towns within the jurisdiction. Most are located near the fringe of the jurisdiction. While towns and plantations have the prerogative to regulate land use locally, these towns and plantations

have chosen to remain within LURC jurisdiction and authority.

Plantations are similar to towns in terms of organization and procedures, but their responsibilities and authority are more limited in scope. The eight towns presently within the jurisdiction all organized since LURC was established in 1971. Town government in these communities is no different from that in other Maine towns, except jurisdiction over land use control remains with LURC.

Portions of twelve different counties are located in the LURC jurisdiction. The bulk of the jurisdiction is within eight counties: Aroostook, Penobscot, Somerset, Piscataquis, Washington, Franklin, Oxford and Hancock Counties. Single plantations or townships are located in Lincoln, Knox, Sagadahoc and Kennebec Counties. In the unorganized townships, county governments pro-

vide or coordinate a number of basic services, including road maintenance and public safety.

A list of the towns and plantations in the Commission's jurisdiction is located in Appendix F.

## 2 Geographic Regions

The jurisdiction is defined by political boundaries that create an irregularly shaped area not easily classified into separate regions. Nevertheless, it is helpful to view the jurisdiction as being comprised of at least four regions: (1) the Northern area, (2) the Western Mountains, (3) the Downeast area and (4) coastal islands.

The Northern area is the largest and generally most remote of these regions. It is comprised of the northern sections of Somerset, Piscataquis and Penobscot Counties, and most of Aroostook County except for populated areas to the east and north. For the purposes of analyzing demographic trends, this area has been further subdivided into a Central Region – comprised of areas near Moosehead Lake and Millinocket – and Aroostook County. But geographically, this region is an unbroken expanse that is viewed by many as the true “North Woods.”

The Western Mountains are located in the southwest portion of the jurisdiction, and include both the Rangeley Lakes and the Carrabassett Valley area. The area is comprised of large portions of Oxford and Franklin Counties, and shares its western border with New Hampshire and Canada.

The Downeast area is a distinct region that is located entirely to the east of Interstate 95. It is comprised of large portions of Washington County, and portions of Hancock County as well. Only two of the townships in this region actually have frontage on the coast.

The 308 coastal islands within the jurisdiction are widely scattered: the southernmost ones are located west of Bristol, the northernmost in the Lubec area. The two islands with year-round populations – Monhegan and Matinicus Plantations – are located in Lincoln and Knox Counties, respectively.

Several townships within the jurisdiction are surrounded by organized areas and are isolated from any of the above-described regions. Examples include Unity Township in Kennebec County, Albany Township in Oxford County and Argyle Township in Penobscot County.

## Physiography

The jurisdiction is a quietly spectacular land of high mountains, vast forests, swift streams and major rivers, expansive lakes and jewel-like ponds, and a host of unique natural areas. Despite the signs of human activity evident in settlements, logging roads, harvested areas, and skid trails, the natural world remains the dominant presence here, and its features have long played an important role in the state's cultural and economic heritage.

The area spans several physiographic regions, and encompasses lands of considerable physical diversity, including coastal lowlands and islands, river valleys, rolling hills, mountains, and a broad plateau. The terrain ranges from relatively flat to mountainous, with elevations generally above 600 feet. Mount Katahdin, a major landmark in central Maine, marks the northern extremity of the Appalachian Mountain chain, which stretches northeast across the state from the New Hampshire border. These mountains occupy the western part of the jurisdiction, and are flanked to the north by a region of rolling hills which encompasses the watersheds of the St. John and Allagash rivers. An open, gently rolling landscape dominates northeast and central areas of the jurisdiction, and includes some good farming soils. To the southeast, small mountains parallel the Downeast coast, presenting a marked contrast to coastal lowlands.

Water is abundant in the jurisdiction. Over 11,000 miles of rivers and streams flow through the area, including the headwaters of most of the state's large rivers. Some of the larger rivers – the Penobscot, Kennebec, Androscoggin, and St. John – have important historic and cultural values because of their roles in settlement and the economy. For centuries, these rivers served as the lifelines of interior settlements, provided transport for raw materials, and supplied unlimited power to industry. Today, they continue to provide hydropower, as well as fisheries habitat and recreational opportunities. The extensive river systems in the jurisdiction are generally the most pristine in the state, and provide some of the best remote canoeing experiences in the Northeast.

Past glacial activity has left the region with a profusion of lakes. Over 3,000 lakes and ponds dot the landscape, providing a total of over 680,000 acres of surface water. These waterbodies range from ponds of less than an acre to Moosehead Lake, the state's largest lake spanning over 74,000 acres. The vast majority of these lakes have excel-

lent water quality and are a significant recreational resource. The jurisdiction contains a diverse array of lakes, but the most highly treasured are its remote ponds – inaccessible, undeveloped lakes which offer a remote recreational experience which is not easily found in the Northeast.

The forest, covering over 95% of the jurisdiction, is central to the region's history, economy, and way of life, and is its defining characteristic. The soils and climate are well-suited to growing trees. Spruce-fir and northern hardwoods are the dominant forest types, both of which are valuable for the manufacture of paper, lumber, and other wood products. The jurisdiction serves as the "wood basket" for the timber industry in the state. The forest is also valued for other reasons, including recreation, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and biodiversity.

## Early Settlement

The region was first inhabited by Native Americans, and many of its features bear the names given to them by these first residents – Passadumkeag, Nesowadnehunk, Caucomgomoc, Mooselookmeguntic, Chesuncook. European explorers came in the 17th century to cut the white pine of coastal areas. Since that time, natural resources have dominated the history of Maine's more remote regions. The first settlements were

simply isolated outposts producing fish, fur, and timber for distant markets. It was presumed that, once timber and other resources had been utilized, the northern reaches of the state would eventually be settled for agriculture, but agricultural settlement largely bypassed the jurisdiction for a variety of reasons. Northern Maine's harsh winters and short growing season discouraged many potential settlers, and the discovery of rich soils in the west lured many settlers from the east. Agricultural settlements advanced southward from the St. Lawrence river valley, but, with the exception of the settlements in Aroostook County, were slowed by establishment of the U.S./Canadian border in 1842 by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

While these factors discouraged agricultural settlement, the development of the paper-making process using wood cellulose in 1867 precipitated the rise of forest management which, with the existing pattern of large landholdings, solidified the region's attractiveness for natural resource utilization. Since that time, forest management has remained the dominant use of land, as well as the backbone of the Maine economy. Most large landholdings in the north have remained relatively intact since the 1850's. Until the 1980's, changes in ownership were limited, and most land transactions were a product of efforts by large landowners to consolidate landholdings. Today, northern sections



*West Forks Plantation*



of the state remain dominated by large blocks of industrial forestland intermixed with large blocks of nonindustrial, usually family-owned, forestland. In central parts of the state, closer to the interstate and settled areas, small, nonindustrial ownerships are intermixed with industrial tracts. Only a small portion of the jurisdiction (approximately 550,000 acres or 5%) is publicly-owned.

Settlement patterns in the region are closely linked to resource utilization. The earliest settlements were located along rivers used to transport timber. Later, the paper-producing companies established themselves near the major rivers – convenient sources of power – on the edge of the vast wood supply. Development did not spread much beyond these one-factory towns. Since most land was held in large ownerships and the rivers provided a mode of transport for logs, there was little impetus for developing roads and other infrastructure that might have spurred settlement.

## Development

The jurisdiction in 1996 continues to be distinguished by a lack of public roads and infrastructure. A handful of state routes pass through sections of the jurisdiction, but none passes through the heart of it. Nevertheless, the region has become more accessible over the years. The first dramatic change came with the construction of logging roads in the 1960's and 1970's as use of the rivers for log transport was phased out. Thousands of miles of haul roads have been constructed since 1971, many of which are maintained on a permanent basis. These roads opened up areas that were previously accessible only by canoe or by foot.

The publication of maps showing the region's extensive logging road network has further increased accessibility and public use. Some roads are gated or blocked to prevent their use by recreationists, although the majority of roads are open to the public. Thousands of people now use these roads to take advantage of the wide variety of recreational opportunities, including fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, whitewater canoeing and rafting, snowmobiling, and skiing. Water-related recreation and associated shoreline development are increasing, along with other forms of recreation such as downhill skiing and motor home camping.

The most common form of development in the jurisdiction is residential development. Types of

residential development include primitive hunting camps, seasonal cottages, second homes and year-round residences.

The overall density of residential development in the jurisdiction is roughly one dwelling per square mile. Year-round housing is concentrated in plantations, towns and townships on the fringe of the jurisdiction near job and population centers. Seasonal housing is concentrated near lakes and other high-value recreational resources.

Few commercial or industrial facilities are located in the jurisdiction, as nearby towns generally provide services and employment. Much of the commercial development in the area is recreation-based: sporting camps, campgrounds, ski areas, rafting operations, and other businesses supporting recreational activities. Some general services such as gas stations and general stores also exist. Most industrial development in the jurisdiction is related to wood production.

## Communities

### Communities Within the Jurisdiction

Within the jurisdiction, there are a number of communities with significant year-round or seasonal populations and distinct characters. These communities exist mostly within the 40 organized towns and plantations within the jurisdiction, but several are in unorganized townships. Most are located on the fringe of the jurisdiction, close to population centers, and dependent on larger towns or the county to provide services such as waste removal, education, and fire control. These communities are usually either traditional rural communities or recreational communities closely associated with large bodies of water and other natural resources.

Most traditional rural communities, such as Oxbow, originate from settlers' lots. Although heavily dependent on services from nearby organized towns, these communities have a strong sense of community and pride.

The economies of these small towns are based on forest products, agriculture, and related services, and do not generally involve large industries. There is a secondary reliance on provision of services to hunters, anglers, snowmobilers, and other recreationists. Up to about 1950, men worked on logging crews during the winter, on the farm during the summer, and trapped or guided hunters in the fall. Since that time, farms have steadily disappeared, employment has shifted more toward

the forest products industry, and more residents are driving to nearby population centers for jobs.

These rural communities still retain much of the character of farming communities. Houses are spread out along the public roads, they generally have no "downtown," and few services are available beyond convenience store/gas stations, a post office, church, and town hall. The populations of these communities have remained stable or declined in the last 50 years. There are fewer working farms, and more hunting camps, but still relatively few "second homes" because of the absence of water-based recreation and distance from population centers.

Most of the jurisdiction's recreational communities are located near lakes and other waterbodies. Rockwood and Lake View Plantation are two typical examples. Much of the housing in these areas is seasonal and the local economies are geared to providing goods and services to seasonal residents and visitors.

Many of the jurisdiction's recreational communities are long-established summer enclaves. But there are variations. The area in the vicinity of The Forks and West Forks Plantations has an established seasonal community, but, since the 1980's, has become a focal point for the commercial white-water rafting industry. A number of rafting-related

businesses are now located on the main state route running through the area.

Several communities located near downhill skiing areas have housing and businesses geared to winter visitors. And increased interest in other winter recreational activities such as snowmobiling, icefishing and ski touring has resulted in extended seasons in many traditional summer communities.

### Communities Near the Jurisdiction

A number of communities adjacent to the jurisdiction exert a strong influence on surrounding plantations and unorganized townships. These communities provide jobs, goods and services to outlying areas, and a number serve as important gateways into the North Woods. While these communities each have their own unique characteristics, most fall into three broad categories: (1) regional population/employment centers, (2) smaller population/employment centers and (3) regional recreational centers.

Millinocket and Lincoln are typical regional population/employment centers. Both have populations over 5,000 people, and offer a full range of local and regional services. Paper mills have historically been the major employer and economic base in these communities, but the trend is toward



*Dallas Plantation town office*

more economic diversity, including tourism. Surrounding areas within the jurisdiction serve as bedroom communities in some instances, and also provide residents of these towns with recreational opportunities.

Ashland and Patten are examples of smaller population/employment centers adjacent to the jurisdiction. These towns have populations in the 1,000-2,000 range and economies based primarily on forest products. While not large enough to serve as significant regional job centers, these towns function as service hubs to many of the more remote parts of the jurisdiction.

Rangeley and Greenville are typical regional recreational centers. In these communities, recre-

ation is a primary part of the economy. The communities provide lodging, flying services, guide services, supplies, equipment rentals and outfitting services, and other amenities that promote and support recreation. Other industries, such as forest products, also support the economies of these communities.

The year-round populations of these communities are 1,000 to 2,000, but their seasonal populations – and that of surrounding areas within the jurisdiction – can swell dramatically during the summer. While summer is clearly the busiest season, recreational opportunities are available through all four seasons to varying degrees.

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## The Jurisdiction's Residents: A Profile

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Natural resources are the backbone of the economy in both rural and recreational communities. They are also responsible for these areas' attractiveness and appeal, and are frequently the reason many residents choose to live in these areas. This strong desire to live in these often isolated communities necessitates creativity in the means of making a living, and uncertainty of income is a way of life. Both the landscape and the climate have shaped the character of those who live here. Generally speaking, residents have a strong physical, emotional, and spiritual relationship with the outdoors, and the cool temperatures and long winters with lots of snow foster independence, self-reliance, and endurance.

### Population

The year-round population of the jurisdiction in 1990, as the jurisdiction was defined at that time, was 11,449. This represents a very low overall population density – less than one person per square mile, but the population is distributed unevenly. Over 70% of this population exists in plantations, towns and townships adjacent to organized towns. The largest population of a minor civil division is 408, but many townships have no permanent residents at all.

Population growth for the jurisdiction overall has been slow; about 10% between 1970 and 1990, or 0.5% per year. By region, this growth var-

ied widely. The jurisdiction's population in the Western region (Oxford and Franklin counties) and the Central region (Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Somerset counties) grew by 47% and 30% respectively, exceeding the 24% growth rate of the state. The jurisdiction's population in the Eastern/Coastal region (including Washington and Hancock counties) grew by 12% while the jurisdiction's population in Aroostook County decreased by 16%.

### Age and Income

The median age of jurisdiction residents is nearly 37 years old, compared with about 34 for the state as a whole. The jurisdiction is somewhat more middle-aged to early-retiree in age than the rest of the state. Thirty-five percent of the households had incomes in 1990 of less than \$15,000, and the median income was \$21,246 compared to the state median of \$27,896.

### Labor Force and Employment

By occupation, 42% of the jurisdiction's 5,020 employed laborers in 1990 were blue collar workers, 35% were white collar workers, 16% were service workers, and 7% were in farming, fisheries, or forestry occupations. Eighty-three percent of the employed residents of the jurisdiction commute to work outside of the jurisdiction, with one-third commuting more than 30 minutes to work.